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ABSTRACT

This handbook, which is intended for individuals involved in program evaluation and improvement at British further education (FE) colleges, contains strategies and materials to help colleges work with industry to make their programs better able to build the skills and knowledge of their local communities. The first two sections offer rationales for making FE more responsive to the training needs of local business and industry and conducting a program audit. Presented in section 3 are 17 case studies that illustrate innovative programs and practices designed to establish/improve links between FE and business/industry and making FE programming more accessible and responsive to local employers. Section 4 lists key points for FE colleges regarding the following: managing the school-business interface; partnerships; flexibility and responsiveness; staffing; curriculum development; and National Vocational Qualifications development. The process of conducting an industry links audit and potential benefits of such audits are examined in section 5. The last section of the handbook is a 14-page audit tool to help FE colleges working with industry assess the following aspects of program development/improvement: strategic planning/policy development; management and coordination; marketing; image/ethos; curriculum planning, design, and delivery; monitoring and evaluation; resources; and costing/pricing and finance. (MN)

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FEDA Further Education Development Agency

Colleges working with industry

Maria Hughes

Volume 1 Number 3

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Executive summary

- Many colleges have recognised the necessity of becoming even more responsive to the needs of industry and enterprise. A growing number of colleges have taken on that challenge by establishing new infrastructures and systems to tailor their provision to industry training needs.
- This handbook:
  - outlines the rationale for increased responsiveness
  - offers case studies from a range of innovative schemes
  - will help colleges to assess how responsive they really are
  - will help colleges to create action plans for improvements
- Seventeen case studies are presented here to illustrate how many colleges are taking a pro-active and responsive stance towards working with their business communities. Just three examples of colleges showing flexibility and innovation are:
  - the Summergroves initiative between Hull College and Hull City Council launch to improve local building skills
  - the Clwyd Care Consortium formed by Deeside College and private sector partners to promote training in child care
  - the work of Hackney College and Rehene Construction in forming a charity to develop off-the-job training

Both the customised provision and the mainstream programmes can provide useful models for other colleges.

For further information, please contact Maria Hughes, FEDA Northern Region, on 0191 201 3300.

1. A rationale for responsiveness

Meeting the training needs of industry and business has traditionally been a central objective of FE colleges. It has become increasingly complicated as these needs grow more company specific. This leads to demands for greater flexibility and responsiveness while resulting in a loss of some economies of scale.

Upheavals in the labour market have led to new companies and industries with attitudes to training very different from those of the era of time-served apprenticeships and training levies. The 1980s witnessed a dramatic growth in small firms and self-employment. Ninety-six per cent of businesses now employ fewer than 20 people. However, while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are of crucial importance to the national economy (constituting one-third of the private sector workforce) surveys indicate their tendency to be preoccupied with the present. They have little time or resources to consider their training needs.

The increased flexibility demanded by changing markets requires a multi-skilled workforce. Despite high levels of unemployment in recent years, the economy continues to suffer from skills mismatches. Rapid technological advances produce equally swift change in working practices and require a continual development of the workforce. Demographic trends, such as an ageing population and increasing numbers of women in the workforce, require companies to adapt their recruitment strategies and customise their products and services accordingly.

Colleges are also in a period of transition. Incorporation has bestowed greater autonomy and more flexibility to respond to needs. It has increased competitiveness within the sector and has strengthened the role of industrial governors who bring experience and expertise in working with the business community. As the FEFCs' funding methodologies are implemented, shifts in resourcing are affecting the financial prospects of colleges, adding momentum to the need to develop income-generating activities.

New initiatives may give rise to new contacts and partnerships between employers and the FE sector. The Modern and Accelerated Apprenticeships Schemes, for example, aim to produce expert workers at technician and supervisory levels. While the schemes are employer- and TEC-led, it is expected that colleges will work alongside the employers to provide underpinning knowledge and higher level training.

These changes are already affecting the FE sector by:

- increasing the number of adult students in FE, some with links into and experience of industry
- strengthening competition in attracting 16-19 year olds and encouraging all providers to seek alternative markets

The White Papers *Competitiveness: helping business to win* (1994) and *Forging Ahead* (1995), highlighted and thus explicitly acknowledged the major role of the FE sector in achieving economic regeneration. Colleges can take their place with other interested bodies in planning and implementing a strategic approach to building up the skills and knowledge of the local community.

2. Assessing the starting point

Initially colleges need to focus on developing processes, systems and procedures for working in parallel with local business and industry, professional bodies as well as with regional and central government agencies to ensure that needs are identified and met. The case studies demonstrate that there is much good practice in colleges. There is, however, a tendency for such activity to be viewed as marginal rather than integral to the whole college offer. Frequent and regular dialogue with the local business community may correct this. The industry links audit in Section 5 is designed to help colleges assess their current interface with business and industry and to indicate action to be taken.

Colleges need to plan for responsiveness and take advantage of all opportunities to foster relationships and partnerships with their business community. Responsiveness to the needs of industry has implications for initial training, continuing professional development, the development of higher level skills and for newly returned entrants to the labour market.

A regular audit of the interface between the college and its local (and, to a greater or lesser extent, regional, national and international) business community is therefore an important part of the strategic planning process.

Colleges in the project found the audit tool provided a range of techniques for planning and developing provision and services. Several considered it useful to involve their business clients in the process as a way of stimulating discussion on developments and improvements.

The audit process is also designed to:

- provide a focus for identifying strengths and gaps in provision, and so identify development needs
- aid action planning
- investigate staff perceptions across the college and highlight any differences in this respect
- provide feedback on the strategic plan
- contribute to a quality review
- inform human resource and curriculum plans
- provide data to maximise industry contacts
- indicate gaps in the consultative process
- provoke thought and discussion

3. Responsiveness in action: case studies

The 17 case studies which follow illustrate innovative practice in meeting the needs of industry. They report both large scale and more modest developments, several of which have significantly influenced other aspects of college provision. They also demonstrate that colleges must adapt their procedures within the context of their own institution.

The development, delivery and strategic planning of an ongoing competence-based programme for the offshore industry

Lowestoft College aims to increase its already significant commercial turnover and the percentage of resource-based learning in its programmes in order to provide a broader range of services to industry. This will include assessment packages, assessor training and training trainers.

One such development was a four-day training programme followed by a half-day assessment. It was created for offshore installation managers and carried out in a fully equipped simulation of an offshore radio room on the Shell site. The programme combined role plays with formal training sessions in, for example, delegation and stress management. Shell UK Ltd provided a radio room plus a control room on a separate site together with linked instructors' rooms equipped with video and audio interfacing.

Shell offered to equip a facility on the college site. The college carried out a cost/benefit analysis based on customising three large college rooms. As the programme often required four college staff, the availability of appropriate trained staff was also a key factor. A market survey assessed support from other companies. The modification of the college rooms to a specialist facility required a combination of college and external contract technical staff which ultimately ensured in-house maintenance/rebuild expertise. The project involved tight schedules with only a limited number of staff available.

The results of the cost/benefit analysis indicated that the project was viable and college senior management and governors gave the go ahead. An in-depth marketing campaign resulted in orders from several large companies. This impetus is being maintained.

Considerable staff development benefits have also resulted, including:

- the ability to write competence-based programmes and develop appropriate assessment packages
- the development and delivery of programmes and provision of high quality supporting materials
- increased delivery of assessor training programmes
- closer links with several large companies owing to joint design and delivery of programmes
- enhanced status in relation to the offshore industry as a result of the college's greater awareness of their needs
- an enhanced market intelligence network
- a sustained staff development programme with strong links to delivery

The initial Shell programme reached completion as anticipated. The company still uses the college facility but to a lesser extent. Changing requirements of industry have resulted in further programmes and markets. A comprehensive portfolio with particular emphasis on customisation is being developed. Outcomes now planned include:

- a contract with a shipping company to adapt the provision for bridge management teams
- adapting the programme to support the requirements of internal teams within companies as they identify particular needs and request ongoing supportive training
- a similar programme to support onshore emergency management and aftermath handling

Track laying and maintenance for the railway industry

Hackney Community College and a large national sub-contractor to the rail industry, Rehene Construction, formed a charity and developed a specific 28-week course to train new operatives in the skills related to railway-track laying and maintenance. The whole package of training and funding was brought together by the charity members, launched through the City Challenge programme and managed by the college.

Having identified a skills gap, Rehene Construction approached the college to assess the potential for off-the-job training. This approach resulted from a recommendation by a training manager from John Laing Construction, with whom the college already had a large contract. The college and the company developed a ten-week programme of off-the-job activities focused on essential skills such as basic bricklaying, handling materials, concreting, health and safety, gas cutting and abrasive wheel use. They also worked with the Rail Industry Training Council to produce NVQ Units. Simulated site experience was a major component of this work and was undertaken at the London Underground training centre at Acton.

The project met the objectives of the college's strategic plan. It:

- broadened the range of provision within Civil Engineering
- extended employer partnerships
- maximised the potential of the City Challenge programme
- improved employment opportunities for local people
- enabled members of staff to extend their experience

The pilot course recruited 30 trainees. For most it was an area of work that they had never considered before, while in some cases it was their second or third training course.

The course came under considerable scrutiny from the funders and other interested organisations, including some major contractors. Many visitors came to observe the trainees at the London Underground Training Centre. The trainees' likely destination initially seemed to be Rehene Construction but when other contractors observed the training, they realised their potential and offered them employment.

This external interest was a great morale boost for the trainees and led to many enquiries about the next course. After 20 weeks of formal training all the trainees took up employed-status training with either Rehene Construction or other contractors.

Within days of the end of the first course, recruitment was under way for a second group of 30. A further course for 15 trainees has since begun, funded by different organisations and the charity is planning another course for 15 people from another London borough. Major contractors are also now in discussion with the charity which may become the sole provider of upskilling for existing staff.

Practice manager development

New College, Durham took advantage of external pump-priming funding to build on existing expertise and develop a range of courses in response to the training needs resulting from the fundamental changes in the organisation and management of health services.

Routine discussion with local family practitioner committees (now the Family Health Service Authority, FHSA) revealed that changes in the organisation of General Practice were imminent. It emerged that practice managers were becoming the norm, and staff needed to develop new skills as, in many cases, the senior receptionist would be taking on responsibility for financial general practice, managing people, customer care, and marketing.

New College decided to become a registered centre for the Practice Manager Development programme. The course content was in most cases easily adapted from the health service management programmes and the financial

aspects were covered by the college's accountancy and finance lecturers. Staff worked closely with a local FHSA to develop the specific knowledge necessary.

When Health Service funding arrangements changed, the college contacted all General Practices in the region and soon established a leading position in the market. Full-time staff appointments and some part-time teachers/trainers were brought in directly from the Health Service to supplement the college expertise, thus enabling a flexible response to further changes..

Later the college was invited to work with the newly formed Association for Health Centre and Practice Administrators (AHCPA) on a new qualification for practice managers delivered mostly at weekends. More recently college staff have worked with the local AMGP team on designing a practice manager-specific stream of the Level 4 NVQ MCI programme. Taster sessions involving the regional organiser of AMGP have been organised in order to introduce the new programme to practice staff, FHSAs and GPs. The programme will be offered through the college's regular provision as an alternative to the modular collaborative programmes currently on offer at full cost.

Delivery of BTEC HNC/D Engineering programmes by flexible learning

Reading College's *Strategic Plan* included a commitment to establish a resource-based centre for flexible delivery of engineering programmes. An initial survey established the anticipated recruitment trends in engineering companies in the Thames Valley region.

The research indicated that traditional day-release and block-release courses in engineering had a limited life-span. Flexible learning programmes were needed if vocational qualifications at advanced levels were to remain viable.

A project group was formed to identify existing resource materials. Where gaps existed, the group created study guides to chart the learning path through written texts, software and assignments. Learning guides for individual study modules were produced, learner support mechanisms put in place and flexible provision actively promoted.

After a one-year development cycle, 16 HNC/D Engineering modules were prepared, in direct response to the needs identified and a common format was adopted for their presentation. In practice this meant that an HNC in Electrical Engineering, an HNC in Electronics Engineering and an HND in Engineering could be delivered by non-traditional means.

A drop-in workshop/surgery was provided in the evenings to support learners and to provide tutorials, practical assignment work and assessments (the assignments and assessments being booked seven days in advance).

The college has enrolled over 60 students on the programme and because of the start-any-time feature, this number is expected to increase throughout the academic year. In contrast, the number of students on traditional day-release pattern of attendance has fallen to around 25.

Planned follow up over the next year includes:

- broadening the scheme to include communications engineering and mechanical engineering modules
- widening the support network available to students with telephone hot-lines and satellite tutor points in large companies supporting the schemes. Discussions are already under way with three large local employers with a view to putting tutors on-site
- using multi-media approaches to develop the current text-based learning guide in a more interactive form

An occupational capability project

A successful manufacturing company completed a skills needs analysis on the parts assembly process of their production line. The technology involved was changing rapidly, plant response time and reliability needed to be enhanced to ensure optimum use of this expensive technology. The company decided to reorganise the section in a matrix of interlinked

'manufacturing cells'. Each cell, staffed by five to six skilled craftsmen with a suitably qualified manager, was to assume responsibility for the complete processing of the parts assembly tasks assigned to it.

Wirral Metropolitan College was invited to work with the company designing a training programme for managers of manufacturing cells.

The training involved modern manufacturing methods and techniques and the principles and practice of management, using real-time and real-work experience to equip the workers with the skills to solve problems associated with production demands.

A rigorous company-driven selection process resulted in 14 machine-setter craftsmen entering this two-year training programme.

The company required, as a primary outcome, that each successful trainee should gain a national qualification. The college designed a Continuing Education Certificate in Advanced Manufacturing Technology validated by BTEC.

The completion of a sophisticated integrative project was central to the overall programme. The students worked in discrete teams and managed a simulated manufacturing company over a one-year span using real production as a focus.

The overall programme was co-ordinated jointly by the company and the college and because of its nature, training took place equally at the college and the company site. The strong emphasis on work-based learning required the secondment of two college staff members full time at the company's site. Selected senior company managers were featured as guest lecturers.

Thirteen of the trainees successfully completed the programme and were awarded a BTEC Continuing Education Certificate. The 'manufacturing cell' structure was subsequently effectively installed and the company has achieved its objective of moving the part assembly of components from batch to flow production.

Reputation boosts business

Having already delivered a successful short course on electronics to a large international company, Bishop Auckland College was contacted by another firm, on the recommendation of the first company, to deliver similar provision.

Within hours of this contact a college representative met the client to organise the release of specialist staff from mainstream duties and to negotiate programme times, dates and location. All the programmes were carried out on company premises with many at weekends or early morning.

The speed of the college's response, in-depth planning and flexibility became known to a third company by word of mouth. As before, a college representative visited the company within hours, and was able to organise the release of specialist staff as well as the training. The company was so impressed by the quality of provision and immediate response, that it will seriously consider the college as its main provider in the future.

The extra benefits to the college have been:

- increased demand for customised short courses
- developing the mainstream curriculum and related opportunities for staff development and training
- access to up-to-date equipment for training
- opportunity for mainstream students to use specialist equipment borrowed from industry

A collaborative approach to management development

Henley College, Coventry recently launched its NVQ Level 5 pilot. As the target population for MCI (Management Charter Initiative) M(2) standards is (broadly) managers responsible for the activities and output of other managers, the numbers of organisations large enough to provide a viable group within acceptable costs is limited. Some employers had been interested

in developing their managers to this level but none had proposed a large enough group. The college then invited three interested companies to nominate up to five delegates for the programme — enough for a viable group and manageable assessment programme.

As a result of this collaborative approach:

- networking across the organisations enables delegates to gain insight into the culture, structure and style of management of three organisations
- interest has been expressed in a Level 4 programme run on a similar basis for the three organisations together
- two more organisations in the Coventry area, having heard of this pilot, have expressed interest in the next training programme

A partnership approach to small firm development

Loughborough College's mission-statement commitment to maintain and improve links with industry was put into practice when representatives from Leicestershire TEC, Loughborough College and industrialists met to consider local research which had identified the need for flexibly delivered management development training for small firms.

This research revealed that small firms preferred to emphasise skills development rather than academic input. It also identified the need for flexibly-based management programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications gained partly or wholly through accrediting competence and prior learning.

A further finding showed that many companies were not able or willing to sponsor individuals through management training programmes.

External funding released a full-time member of college staff dedicated to development of programmes to meet these needs. Additional funding from Leicestershire TEC enabled small firms to claim a 50% reduction in fees.

The college developed a flexible competence-based programme marketed to organisations which had expressed an interest in MCI through the MCI network.The programme was developed to give managers underpinning knowledge and understanding and the opportunity to practise the skills required by supervisory, first-line or senior managers. Workshops and an advisor provided the necessary support and guidance to enable the candidates to provide a portfolio demonstrating competence to the MCI standards at NVQ Level 3, 4 or 5.

Programme delivery was adapted and offered at a variety of times to suit the needs of the learners.

Ongoing evaluation by candidates and the steering group checked that the content was valid and amended as necessary. This involved tutors, programme members and employers, and concentrated on the development of competence in the workplace.

The benefit to small firms undertaking the programme was considerable and the costs well justified. Dissemination of outcomes is being undertaken by Leicestershire TEC.

A very flexible approach to the delivery and assessment of management development programmes has resulted from this initiative. Although originally aimed at helping small firms, the programme can also be customised for large organisations and individuals. It allows candidates to identify their competence and their learning needs and select a programme tailored to their needs. Competence-based management development programmes leading to NVQ Levels 3, 4, and 5 in Management are now available through crediting competence (APL), modular workshops, evening courses and open learning. The modular delivery of the programmes allows a 'pick-and-mix 'approach to learning and development. Programmes can be delivered either in college or in company and the college has not yet met a situation it cannot accommodate.

Improving customer focus

The Commercial Division of Broxtowe College was restructured three years ago to become more customer focused and earn 80% of revenue from 20% of customers. A marketing strategy was required which detailed strategic objectives, linked them to potential markets, and identified how these could be reached.

Customers were categorised into **Key**, **Active** and **Casual**.

Key customers are targeted as preferred suppliers of substantial training contracts. They receive personal visits and regular call backs. Work is undertaken with such customers to create partnerships, understand needs and develop practical expertise for growth.

Active customers who buy small training programmes are regularly contacted by telephone to discuss needs. Visits are made where appropriate.

Casual customers receive a quarterly mailshot. They are invited to respond by FREEPOST and are 'promoted' to the Active or Key list as appropriate.

There is continual movement between the three lists which are recorded on a database and printed quarterly .

A new full-time post of Business Development Manager was created in the Division to help the Manager to develop the Key Customer strategy: targets were set for numbers of visits. At the same time a part-time Business Development Assistant was assigned to keep and develop contact with Active customers.

The new strategy has resulted in:

- an increase in income of 26% in 1992/3 and 16% in 1993/4
- the addition of an IT Business Development Manager to meet a target of 40% growth in 1994/5
- a reduction in the fixed costs per training day ratio
- generation of 77% of revenue from 20% of customers in 1993/4
- a working partnership with customers which ensures that training objectives are clear and that evaluation takes place not only with delegates but also with the manager. This leads naturally to action planning and increased repeat business

Before this strategy was implemented lecturers from mainstream provision made speculative calls and visits — an ineffective approach because:

- their ability to respond to customer requests for visits quickly and flexibly outside classroom commitments was limited
- many lecturers felt that their skills were better suited to negotiating course content than cold calling and negotiating prices

The new strategy enabled the Division to work very closely with delivery subject specialist colleagues who contact customers after broad details have been agreed.

Generating call backs from a computerised database is now being developed for the Student Services and College Information Service areas of the college.

Training for inward investment

South Tyneside College together with the Employment Service, the local TEC and an employer developed a training programme and a delivery strategy for an inward investor. The aim of the partnership was to recruit unemployed people and to train them in a variety of skills for work in a purpose-built electronics products factory. Each trainee followed a skills-training programme suited to his or her occupation and a core programme dealing with, for example, aspects of health and safety, company procedures and policies.

The partners in the project decided that, wherever possible, trainees would be recruited from the local unemployment register. Initial selection was carried out by the local Job Centre to a phased recruitment and training plan. The college and other partners were in regular (at times daily) contact as the training programme

gathered pace. In order to tailor the training specifically to the needs of the company and to ascertain the precise procedures involved, staff from the college and the TEC spent two weeks in the company's factories in Malaysia, Hong Kong and China.

The recruitment and training skills developed were scheduled to be in phase with the factory development. Initially the emphasis was on training clerical and reception staff, followed by warehouse staff and forklift truck drivers, assembly line staff, plastics moulders and spray painters. This stage was achieved in ten months with each trainee receiving six weeks intensive training and the guarantee of a job interview at the end.

From a total of 400 people who started the programme, 267 of them obtained full-time employment. A further 30 found employment with other companies after their training. Apart from job-specific skills, each trainee received guidance on job preparation, team working, basic skills (where required), basic first aid and IT training.

Following this initial training programme, the college has delivered a number of short courses for supervisors and safety staff, and continues to maintain close links with the company. A further large scale training programme is to be delivered shortly to coincide with the factory extension programme.

Being in close touch with industry may result in new programmes being jointly resourced and implemented — maximising opportunity and minimising initial investment.

The Summergroves initiative

Hull City Council, in co-operation with Hull College, launched the Summergroves initiative in response to local concerns about a building skills shortage. It aimed to supply Hull City Services with a source of well trained craftsmen and women, stabilise the declining construction skills in the city, provide meaningful employment for school leavers and produce end products of value to the community.

Summergroves — 85 acres of prime development land in west Hull some eight miles from the college campus — provides a realistic work environment and training complex which is the flagship of the college's Faculty of Business and Civil Engineering. The complex facilitates an integrated approach to construction training by providing training on site in the college-run workshops in the nearby training centre.

The initiative's emphasis on training in the workplace was congruent with Hull College's aim of developing NVQs. Provision of education and training on site by experienced lecturers plus planned work experience supervised by on-site instructors, has enabled the college to:

- extend the range of services to industry and commerce
- ensure that learners have access to progression routes to employment or further study
- offer diverse modes of delivery/ learning programmes within the national framework of qualifications which contribute to the achievement of the NTETs
- consult and respond to local community and industry in determining the range and nature of its educational services

The initiative has been extremely successful. Houses being built by the apprentices under the supervision of craft trainers, are sold on the private market. Of the 30 houses in the completed Phase I, 22 are either occupied or in the process of being bought. The 29 houses in Phase II are currently under construction and will be coming on to the market soon.

The trainees were initially recruited on a Youth Training programme and then offered a further two-and-a-half year apprenticeship in their chosen craft. Around 170 apprentices had completed their training at the time of writing and of those not employed by Hull City Services, 85% gained full-time jobs in the local construction industry. One hundred and twenty-seven trainees and apprentices are currently employed.

The intensive college training together with properly structured work experience enables accelerated achievement of NVQs at levels 2 or 3. The innovative nature of the Summergroves initiative has attracted considerable local and national interest with with awards by the Hull Civic Society and visits from industry, other local authorities, training providers, national organisations such as the Building Employers' Confederation and a series of government ministers.

The project has required flexibility from teaching staff and management, made possible by the professional response and commitment of the staff. The initiative has proved an excellent staff development opportunity, requiring staff to take a more pro-active and responsible role.

Foreign languages for industry and commerce

Chelmsford College offers a wide range of modern language training to local companies and aims to respond quickly to requests, providing a needs analysis service and maximum flexibility in delivery. The college has a team of linguists, all of whom are teacher trained and can offer a range of languages including French, German, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. They are employed, as required, on a part-time basis, to fulfil contracts. With most companies preferring classes in or around lunch-time, it is necessary to ensure that the team includes enough tutors in the more commonly requested languages.

Such specialist staff are difficult to retain but leadership from the course co-ordinator has promoted team spirit and fostered loyalty to the college. Tutors are offered regular help and advice, access to an ever-developing bank of teaching materials and equipment (available on loan), and yearly in-service training. This is crucial as it allows the college to guarantee the consistency and quality of the language training it offers.

The programme has contributed to meeting the training needs of the local economy and community; to broadening the income-base of the college; and to developing the college's relationships with local commerce and industry.

General satisfaction with the language classes has raised the college profile within the companies and the wider community. It has led directly to commissioning of more work by companies in other curriculum areas. Students who have been introduced to the college at their workplace have gone on to attend college, for example, as evening-class students. The college is able to capitalise on occasional publicity about successes in the foreign language field, which feature in the press because of the commercial connection.

The curriculum of the college has been broadened by the in-company languages work. Many of the team work on other courses in the college (e.g. Open Learning, evening classes, GNVQ, vocational crafts, etc.). Developmental work undertaken specifically for the commercial programme, especially in public examinations, has benefited vocational programmes like GNVQ where work-related (NVQ) units in modern languages are now available to all students as additional studies.

Mainstream full- and part-time students benefit from an enhanced curriculum and access to commercially experienced staff. For those staff, commercial contacts have been widened, expertise has improved and resources have been enhanced as the earned income has supported expenditure on training and materials.

Developing NVQs

In some cases, colleges can play a significant part in the development of new NVQs, alongside lead bodies. Bishop Burton College took a leading role in the development of NVQs in the pig industry.

They took the Agriculture Standards developed by the Lead Body and, with Lead Body agreement, customised them to meet the specific requirements of the pig industry. This work involved collaborative working between the college staff and unit managers from the industry.

Partners in Care

In 1992 Deeside College with partners from the private care sector formed the Clwyd Care Training Consortium to support training in child care and care of older people by developing a training, development and assessment infrastructure in North East Wales. The project made a significant impact within the local private nursery sector, by helping to up-skill the workforce and supporting the consequent quality enhancement of care provision.

It became clear that a homogenous view of the sector was inadequate, as sub-sectors existed with different methods of working and economic bases. In particular, childminders provided a large proportion of the total child care in the area but because of the isolated nature of their work and their small earning capacity had very little access to NVQ training and assessment.

The consortium concentrated on developing a flexible model which would alleviate some of the access problems for childminders and others working in small scale settings. A feasibility study tested the market. Premises at Deeside College were subsequently adapted for an Early Years Training and Assessment Centre where carers could be assessed in units and elements not normally experienced in their workplace.

Once the infrastructure had been developed, a model to overcome the financial barriers and offer additional solutions to mobility problems was designed.

Assessor training was offered to eight volunteers from the sector who also received skill training to NVQ Level 3 if they did not already possess a recognised childcare qualification. Assessors and candidates were linked on a geographical basis. Thirty-two more childminders were then able to receive financial and learning support to gain access to assessment for NVQ Level 2.

The commitment and enthusiasm have been encouraging and resulted in remarkable progress. The assessors are well under way with their NVQ Level 3 and will then concentrate on their TDLB assessor training. An equally successful introductory evening has been held for their 32 colleagues which also augurs well for the future of the project. The Early Years Training and Assessment Centre is proving very popular, attracting considerable interest from agencies within the voluntary and statutory childcare sector. With constant support, both groups will achieve their qualifications.

The project demonstrated that there are areas of training need which are currently outside the 'traditional' FE market. Listening to customers and potential customers and being prepared to offer innovative and flexible solutions to problems can remove many apparent barriers.

Relationship selling

Basingstoke College of Technology [BCOT] identified the need to develop relationships with companies to ensure that key decision makers in companies associated them with training, thus gaining preferred supplier status.

To achieve this the college needed to:

- identify and overcome barriers
- enable long standing relationships to be built
- identify the areas of curriculum development needed to support the target market
- increase awareness of BCOT services

A 'sales' team of academic staff was released on a part-time basis working under a full-time corporate liaison officer.

Products and services on offer were clearly defined. Emphasis was placed on promotion of NVQs and workplace delivery and assessment to reduce pressure on accommodation. A pricing policy was developed to encourage take up of NVQs, and enable SMEs to access training and education, while providing discount for 'bulk purchasing'. Constraints that would deter in-company provision, such as group size, were identified and removed.

Managing the initiative required the identification of individual roles and activities and a set of procedures, which included:

- regular co-ordinating meetings of all team members
- identifying target companies
- scheduling visits to companies
- negotiating and tendering processes
- gathering and disseminating feedback from visits and maintaining records
- keeping performance data

The Corporate Liaison Officer provides a focal point for identifying and allocating companies to team members, negotiation, the collection and dissemination of information and keeping performance data.

In the first two months of the initiative 100 companies were contacted and 80 were visited. One hundred and seventy-three enrolments resulted from these visits — all of which will involve training and assessment in the workplace. A greater, shared understanding of industry needs and how FE provision can satisfy them has resulted in extending the range of NVQs offered by BCOT and improvements to the flexibility of delivery. Other initiatives, such as joint assessment centre status in specialist vocational areas, are being developed with companies.

Further developments will involve:

- a review of the initiative to ensure that the long-term strategy supports continuation of the project and its absorption into college culture
- building on relationships established with industry so that 'sales' turn to 'account management'

Developing and delivering inter-disciplinary packages through a college company

The trend for departments to become cost centres in their own right can lead to their isolation or even worse, internal competition between departments. This could lead to inter-disciplinary courses being given lower priority where individual departments do not assume clear ownership and receive the budgetary benefits.

A large market research project, investigating training needs and practices in North Cumbria, revealed weaknesses in Carlisle College's ability to meet some training demands. Analysis of the survey revealed that there was a great demand for general health and safety training which the college was not meeting, despite having the capacity.

Isolated courses concerned with health and safety were being delivered by individual lecturers operating independently in different departments. Lecturers in law operating within the Business and Management Department also regularly taught Health and Safety law as part of general F/HE provision on traditional courses such as HNC/HND Business Studies.

Two departments represented on this committee had investigated the NEBOSH course before but had not pursued it when they discovered that they could not cover all elements from within their own departments.

To guard against such confusion a college must have a 'cross-college' process or mechanism for spotting and exploiting opportunities. Although a company has proved successful at Carlisle College, a Business Development Unit under whatever title could fulfil the same function. Experience suggests that a cross-college curriculum committee would not be as successful as no-one would have clear responsibility or ownership. A company or unit establishes an identity internally and externally and its staff is able to set themselves targets against which they can be measured.

The VEKA plc training initiative

One of the leading manufacturers of PVC-U window and door systems in the United Kingdom wanted to become a centre of excellence for education and training to fabricators of PVC-U systems.

To sustain growth the company needed either to launch a new product or to increase their market share of existing products. As their product range was continually reviewed and updated, they decided to concentrate on the latter.

Preston College worked with the company to consider solutions to this problem. Five areas of training were identified and the college was subsequently contracted to research and develop a short course for surveying PVC-U windows and doors. VEKA's Technical Services Department identified some of the training objectives to include while the college researched the current best practices and national standards for PVC-U systems and other training objectives.

The education and training programme aimed to increase the company's market share by enhancing the quality of its workforce and promoting a 'centre of excellence' philosophy to stimulate confidence (similar to the 'Rolls Royce' effect in the motor trade). This would allow the company to move away from its double-glazing image and market its skilled staff.

A training specification based on the research outcomes was prepared in consultation with the company. Areas of responsibilities were identified for the preparation of materials: certain technical information could only be provided by the technical services team; legal and health and safety information was commissioned from a consultant surveyor; and the bulk of the construction and building information was provided by the college.

Initially it was anticipated that the courses could be linked to National Standards but discussions with an awarding body were inconclusive. Since then NVQs have either been put in place or are being developed. Because of the thorough development process and the use of educationally sound approaches to the training, it is relatively simple to link the training courses to the appropriate NVQs — thus offering a high quality training course, linked to a National Standard.

4. Key points for colleges

Managing the interface

- Senior management must be committed to a strategy for working with industry and driving it forward. A supportive and empowering management is the central 'essential' ingredient to such a strategy.
- Flexibility within the college strategic plan is essential for coping with unpredicted demand to compensate for sudden areas of decline or to participate in opportunities s.
- Major projects must be managed at a senior level within the college, with a single point contact and administrative support. Large and complex programmes need management time and a high level of commitment from involved college staff.

Partnerships

- Colleges should establish clear guidelines and objectives for partnerships and develop the appropriate management. If there are real long-term opportunities, consider setting up a charity organisation.
- Good lines of communication must be established with all partners. Involve them whenever and wherever possible and take risks jointly.
- Sound systems of financial transfer and accountability are essential.
- Colleges need to develop appropriate organisational structures to maximise the effectiveness of industrial liaison.

Flexibility and responsiveness

- Colleges should anticipate change and be pro-active rather than re-active.
- Colleges should be alert to change in areas where they have strengths and be prepared to adapt and change to meet new demands.
- Alternative modes of delivery for traditional courses should be explored.
- By being involved from the beginning of company training and development programmes, particularly when they are related to the objectives of other agencies, colleges can contribute to business growth and economic regeneration.
- The ability to respond quickly is essential and to that end, a manager or co-ordinator with a clear remit to act is required. The ability to make decisions and to be innovative in the delivery mechanisms is of paramount importance.
- Flexibility is the most important factor in securing the participation of small firms. A choice of delivery methods together with the option of change if circumstances require, may enable many candidates to complete the programme despite the pressures of being a manager in a small firm

Staffing

- Not all staff are suitable for front-line work with industry. Intensive staff development may be needed to facilitate quality delivery.
- The current climate lends itself to a flexible mix of college and company staff for assessment, training and the training of trainers.This mix is not appropriate to all college staff. It is critical that those involved are dedicated and that their desire to provide 'customer service' is very strong.
- Staff involved in marketing to industry must be familiar with the full range of college services.
- Full use should be made of labour market intelligence and surveys of local industrial sectors by, for example, Chambers of Commerce, Training and Enterprise Councils

- Colleges should establish market demand and undertake a cost/benefit analysis before embarking on high risk ventures.
- Guidance and support from senior managers, directors and managing directors from industry is invaluable.
- Every opportunity should be taken to pursue individual contacts. Follow-up interviews may be useful in consolidating industrial partnerships. Industrial visits can strengthen the links between the college and local businesses.

Curriculum development

- Integrating current external requirements into the internal curriculum will ensure that students are aware of and equipped for the commercial marketplace.
- Collaboration between education and industry can enhance both full- and part-time college provision.

NVQ development

- Colleges can perform an active role in the development and delivery of NVQs.
- Meeting low volume training needs of individuals or small groups of people can be achieved cost effectively if colleges respond imaginatively.

5. Using the industry links audit

The audit may be undertaken in a variety of ways. Most colleges carried out the survey on a cross-college basis with specific input from staff involved in particular areas of the college such as a marketing or business unit. These staff also carried out most of the analysis. A few colleges limited the survey to a specific section of the college.

Colleges may find a progressive scale useful for identifying priorities for action. It is also important to ensure that evidence is collected not only on development of policy but also on its implementation.

A wide range of staff may take part in the audit, including: vice/assistant/deputy principals, senior managers responsible for marketing, managing directors of college companies, senior managers responsible for industry links, directors of finance, programme managers and lecturers. It may be undertaken as a group activity with a preliminary briefing session — possibly as part of a staff development exercise.

Colleges in the project found that the audit exercise highlighted the need for actions such as:

- defining more clearly the operations of the college sections and the marketing unit
- feeding results into a possible restructuring of the roles/functions of middle managers
- creating a college sales team
- introducing a recording system of all contacts with employers for use by all staff across the college to identify needs and perceptions
- preparing a formal report to consider the formation of a dedicated business unit
- drafting a questionnaire for students on mainstream provision to identify host companies' needs in other areas

The results of the audit done by the colleges also revealed:

- a lack of systems and procedures, and weak commitment to development planning
- the need to link information from mainstream provision into potential for fully costed activity
- the inappropriate natures of policies and documentation for this area of work
- resource problems
- the tension between central functional specialisms and the devolved approaches in course teams

Colleges are at different stages of development in their relationships with their business communities and the context of each will determine its response. However, the audit process may instigate a systematic assessment of the current position and suggest action for subsequent development plans.

The audit instrument which follows is a model which may be customised and adapted to meet specific needs. It may be photocopied for internal use only if required.

Colleges working with industry

Audit tool

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
1. Strategic planning/policy development					
1.1 Is meeting the needs of business and industry central to college policy?	Present in: • the mission statement • the strategic plan • policy relating to staff development, curriculum development, etc. Policies are monitored, reviewed and updated. Policies identify how work with industry can contribute to the achievement of the national targets and national training needs.				
1.2 Is the college collaborating with appropriate bodies to determine and plan priorities for the development of training required for economic regeneration?	Working with: • TECs • local authority development units • the DTI business link network • Chambers of Commerce				
1.3 Does the college identify and set clear targets within its annual programmes for work with industry?	In relation to: • total turnover • products/services to be offered • employers to be targeted • student numbers				
1.4 Is adequate flexibility built into the planning process for the college to respond quickly to unforeseen opportunities?	In relation to: • resource allocation (including for development work) • target setting and review				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
1.5 Are resources specifically allocated to promote and sustain college/employer links?					
1.6 Is the institution tracking information arising from work with industry and feeding this back into the planning process?					
1.7 Is the institution nurturing a culture of creativity and innovation?	There is a systematic approach to capturing and supporting new ideas with commercial potential. Barriers to innovation are identified and removed. Good practice is identified and disseminated. Staff generating income for the college are rewarded				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
2. Management and co-ordination 2.1 Has the institution identified and established effective structures for co-ordinating and developing work with industry and commerce?	The full range of responsibilities are identified and allocated. There is clear line management, including support at an adequately senior level. There are clear lines of accountability. Comprehensive procedures have been drawn up. Structures support the development of long-term relationships with industry and repeat business. The management and organisational structure facilitates appropriate recruitment of employer sponsored students on to mainstream/customised provision; curriculum linking with employers; and work placements.				
2.2 Are there procedures for ensuring that inter-disciplinary packages (i.e. drawing on several curriculum areas) can be offered?					
2.3 Is there adequate liaison between faculties and any separate college companies/enterprise unit, to develop and market the range of the institution's services/products to businesses?					

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
3. Marketing					
3.1 Is there a comprehensive marketing strategy	Strategic marketing objectives, target markets and potential competition are identified. The strategy reflects economic developments, relevant local initiatives and labour market changes and curriculum strengths. The strategy is informed by information arising from work with industry. Implementation of the strategy is monitored.				
3.2 Is the college using all possible sources to: – promote the institution – gather market intelligence on current and future training needs?	Sources are regularly informed about the range of provision which the institution can offer: • college staff and students • industrial and TEC governors • contacts in industry/visits to industry • external agencies: TECs, careers services, etc. • work experience placements				
3.3 Is there an effective system for collecting, storing and retrieving: – market intelligence – information on industrial clients	There is a marketing/employer database. There is a systematic approach to recording market opportunities across the college.				

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Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
3.4 Is the college leading or following market demands?	The college: • is pro-active rather than reactive in its work with industry, and creates a demand for its products • ensures that potential clients are aware of the range of products/services it can offer • uses national initiatives (e.g. NTETs; IiP etc.) as marketing tools wherever possible and where appropriate takes steps to acquire the status of a 'preferred supplier' of training provision • anticipates possible changes in client needs and, develops new products to meet these (e.g. assessor training) • responds to labour market trends and develops strategies to reach non-traditional participants (e.g. SMEs and the self-employed)				
3.5 Is the college promoting the continued use of the college to its full cost students.	Post-course evaluation surveys are undertaken with students. Full cost students are circulated with information about college provision.				
3.6 Is the effectiveness of advertising and promotional activities monitored?					

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
4. Image/ethos					
4.1 Is the college activity promoting a positive image to the business community?	The college is aware of the perceptions of the local business community. It is addressing any negative aspects of its image. Accommodation, catering and other services reflect the image the college wishes to project. Staff are aware of the image it wishes to promote and their responsibility for this.				
4.2 Is it able to respond rapidly and consistently to enquiries from industry?	Clear contact points for industrial clients. Efficient procedures for processing requests are in place, and monitored to ensure they are followed consistently				
4.3 Is the college able to meet client expectations consistently?					

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
5. Curriculum planning, design and delivery					
5.1 Is the institution able to identify areas of curriculum development at an early stage, linked to the marketing strategy and strategic planning process?	Necessary staff development is provided so that there is adequate, up-to-date expertise in house to develop and deliver high quality programmes. Curriculum liaison and advisory groups are in place across all provision and include significant employer representation. Information is regularly sought from students and employers on the relevance of learning activities and equipment. Lecturers are encouraged to research and update their subject specialism.				
5.2 Has the institution developed a flexible approach to delivery, which enables it to offer a total package to its industrial clients and facilitate rapid response?	The college can use a range of delivery modes and switch as necessary. Training locations, timetabling, the nature of support, and the accreditation offered to learners, reflect their needs. Learning strategies are appropriate to the needs of part-time adult learners External services are bought in where internal expertise is not available. The approach seeks and provides solutions to problems.				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
5.3 Is the institution building on mainstream curriculum developments to enhance their training offer industry?	The college: • has developed adequate assessment, certification and records of achievement for in-service training for industry • is exploiting unitisation of the curriculum				
5.4 Is the institution ensuring that mainstream and specialist curricula are enhanced through links with industry?	The college uses and builds on the experience of its students in employment to inform the curriculum. Liaison with the relevant industrial sector ensures that the curriculum and its assessment in initial and post experience provision are appropriate. Expertise developed from working closely with specific industries informs mainstream provision and vice versa. Industrial contacts and placements are used to link initial training to the workplace, arrange work placements, etc.				
5.5 Is the college using labour market intelligence and related information to ensure that the education and training offered at initial and post experience level is relevant and appropriate to the needs of: – local employers – national training needs?	Links with the TECs, LMI Officer, etc. Information from local authority planning department is regularly scrutinised. LMI from a variety of sources is analysed and implications for the curriculum offer assessed.				

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Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
6. Monitoring and evaluation 6.1 Are the college's quality assurance arrangements appropriate for the diversified range of products and services?					
6.2 Is there a systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the college's provision for industry?	Evaluation includes consideration of the quality and quantity of provision. Performance indicators relating to the specific targets are set in advance. The framework recognises the need to be able to respond flexibly and rapidly to client needs. Outcomes are assessed jointly with the firms concerned. Customer feedback is evaluated. There is a complaints procedure, of which the clients are made aware. Potential for repeat business is analysed and linked to the planning process.				
6.3 Do the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the provision link quality systems within the college to mechanisms for ensuring continuous improvement?					

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
7. Resources					
7.1 Staffing and staff development					
7.1.1 Does the staffing policy of the institution and its implementation recognise the need to attract and develop the expertise required for the provision of a range of services and products to industry?	Staffing policies and contracts allow a flexible and rapid response to client needs.				
	The institution regularly audits and records staff skills, including the competence, attitudes and inter-personal skills necessary for customised training for industry.				
	Staff are encouraged to identify new skills they need to develop and feed this into staff development plans.				
	The college considers the need for skills for work with industry when recruiting new staff.				
	Responsibilities for work with industry and the division of roles, reflect the strengths and commitment of the staff.				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
7.1.2 Does staff development meet the needs of providing services to industry?	Adequate resources for training to be expanded and diversified as necessary, (e.g. industrial placements, mentoring, etc.) and facilitating staff release.				
	The college ensures staff are aware of the personal and institutional benefits of skills development and other updating (e.g. consultancy, costing/pricing, project management).				
	The college promotes lifelong learning amongst its own staff.				
	The college provides opportunities for work shadowing and secondments to/from industry.				
	A whole-college approach to customer care is maintained through training for support staff.				
	Staff development is provided across the institution for general awareness of services and products.				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
7.2 Accommodation, equipment and services					
7.2.1 Are the facilities chosen for delivering training and services to businesses suitable for the purpose?	Flexibility allows the client to choose the best location, including off/on-site.				
	Accommodation is accessible with parking provided as necessary.				
	There is appropriate decor, furniture, fixtures and fittings, toilets.				
	Links with manufacturers and industry for specialist equipment where necessary (e.g. through leasing).				
	Equipment is up to date and appropriate for teaching adults in commerce and industry.				
	Cleaning and catering services are adequate for business clients.				
	Where necessary the institution invests in upgrading/refurbishing facilities.				
	The institution ensures that, where possible, other groups can access enhanced facilities.				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan: Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action plan: Action needed and by whom	Action plan: Performance indicators	Action plan: Target date
8. Costing/pricing and finance					
8.1 Does the college have a costing/pricing policy and strategy which: – takes account of the mission statement and strategic plan – provides adequate flexibility to respond to identified opportunities?	The priorities in the mission statement and strategic plan are reflected in the costing/pricing policy. The policy is flexible enough to respond to a range of needs (e.g. SMEs, etc.) The policy reflects the realities of the market. The policy/strategy enables pump-priming funding to be allocated for development after investment appraisal. The policy provides a discount structure for bulk purchasing.				
8.2 Is the institution tapping into all available and appropriate sources of funding?	National and European level information is collected and considered. The institution has the expertise to advise the business community on potential sources of funding for its work with industry. An effective mechanism for securing sponsorship deals is in place.				

Audit question	Evidence	Action plan			
		Current profile (Yes, No, Comments)	Action needed and by whom	Performance indicators	Target date
8.3 Are effective financial and accounting systems in place?	The financial information system is efficient enough for accurate costings.				
	Flexible accounting systems are in place.				
	Responsibilities for contracts, costing and pricing are fully documented and adhered to.				
	There are clear guidelines and procedures for costing and pricing provision, accessible to all necessary staff.				
	Systems and contracts can provide for off-site delivery whenever necessary.				
	Procedures include the need for clarity relating to the timescale and process for financial transfer between client and provider.				